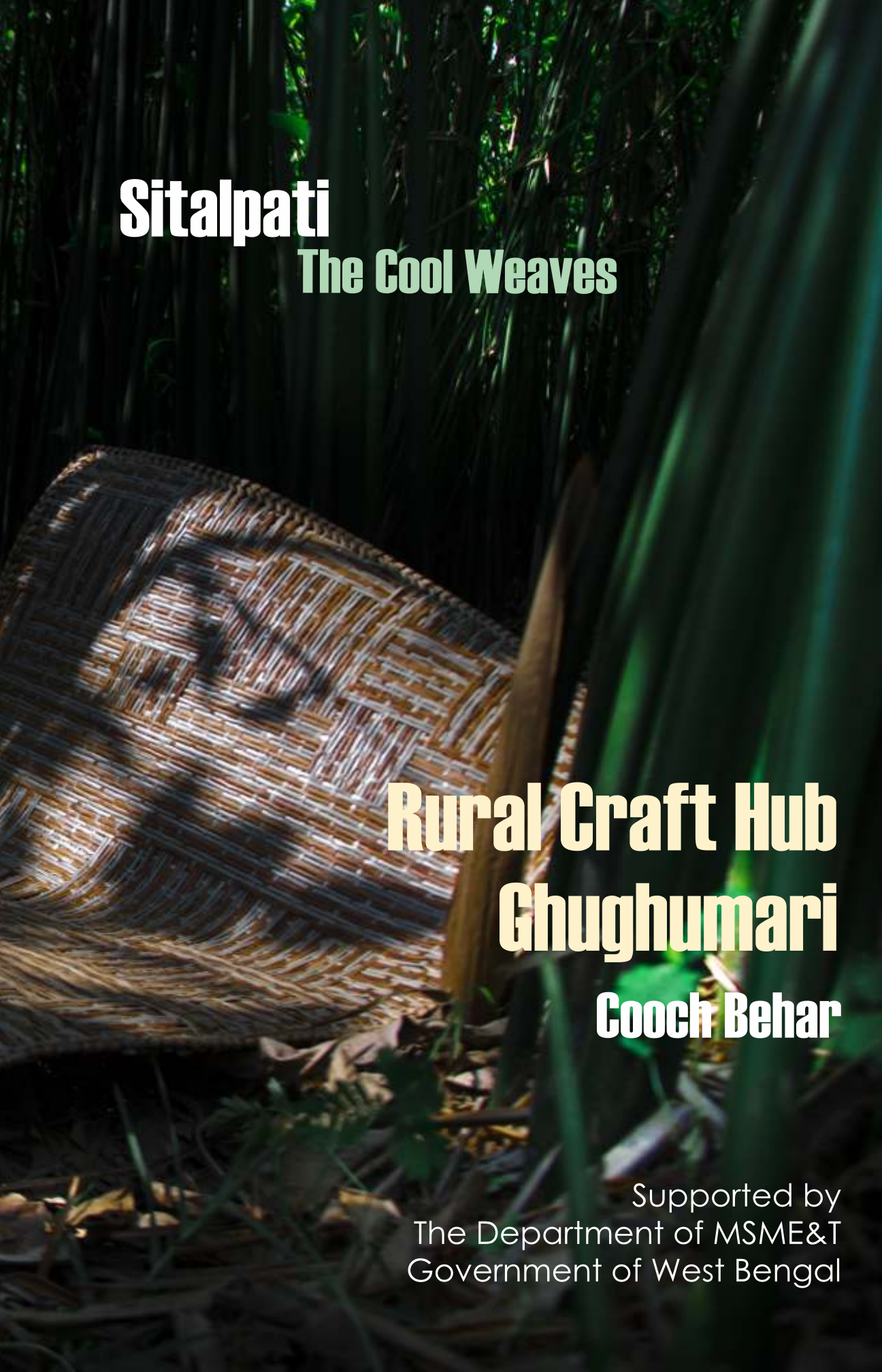




Sitalpati

The Cool Weaves

**Rural Craft Hub
Ghughumari
Cooch Behar**

Supported by
The Department of MSME&T
Government of West Bengal

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A hub of Sitalpati has been developed at Ghughumari block of Cooch Behar district as part of the endeavour undertaken by the Department of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises & Textiles, Government of West Bengal in collaboration with UNESCO.



1. the location

Ghughumari:

Located in the north-eastern part of the state, Cooch Behar was the seat of the princely state of Koch Behar, ruled by the Koch dynasty. A large population of the district is involved in Sitalpati weaving. The main concentration of Sitalpati weavers are in Ghughumari and its surrounding area.

Getting there:

By Train: New Cooch Behar is the nearest railway station. Ghughumari is about 14 kms by road from the station.

By Road: Driving distance from Kolkata to Cooch Behar is 805 kms. Ghughumari is another 8 kms from Cooch Behar town. It takes nearly 4 hours of drive to reach Ghughumari from Siliguri.

By Air: Cooch Behar airport which is 7 kms from Ghughumari operates twice a week. Bagdogra is 115 kms from Cooch Behar .

Accommodation:

There are many hotels in Cooch Behar town. The resource centre at the hub also has accomodation facilities.

Nearby places of interest:

- Cooch Behar Rajbari: Tourists can visit the palace and the museum maintained within the palace.
- Madanmohan Bari close to the palace is a famous temple.
- Sagar Dighi
- The ancient Kamteshwari temple is around 30-32 kms away from Cooch Behar. The Siddheswari temple is located 12 kms away from Ghughumari and the Baneswar Shiva temple is 16 kms away.
- There is a Shiva temple, 500 mts away from the resource center at Dhaluabari.

2. the plant

Sitalpati is made from 'murta' (*Schumannianthus dichotomus*) a plant of the reed family. It is a rhizomatous plant with an erect and glossy green stem having no joints, attaining a height of 35 metres and a diameter of 2.0 centimetre. The stems are leafy and dichotomously branched. Like other reeds, it grows on marshy and water logged areas.



Murtha or Mukta (pearls) is the local name for *Schumannianthus dichotomus* as the fruits of the plant resemble pearls. According to local beliefs Lord Krishna wanted Radha to gift him pearls. Radha denied the gift. Krishna said he himself would grow pearls in a garden and planted this certain plant which grew that very day and bore seeds that looked and shined like pearls. Out of 12 famous gardens in Vrindavan, one is Mukta.

mukta

3.

the fibre



1. First layer of the *Pati* cane is sliced to be used as '*Sital Pati*'. This *Sital* slip is shiny and smooth on the outside and rough on the inside. The outer side is waterproof and green in color when fresh but turns red on drying under sunlight (*Laal Sital*). The slips are kept wet by soaking in water before they are woven.

2. The second layer is mat & rough on both sides. This layer is called '*Buka*'. The quality of these slips is inferior to *Sital* slips. This layer blackens with time and becomes more brittle. The width of the *Buka* slips is more than the *Sital* slips. Also the weaves using *Buka* are not as tight as *Sital* slips.

3. The layer underlying the first layer of *Buka* is one more layer of *Buka*. This layer is of inferior quality and can be used as tying fibres. Also used for thatching walls and roofs. *Buka* slips are cheaper than *Sital* slips.

The stem and the branches of the plants are used to procure cane strips. First of all, the canes to be used for obtaining requisite slips are washed in water. After washing, these canes are kept in the sun for drying. These are then divided into equal halves lengthwise. These divided halves are again sub-divided into four splits of equal length and breadth. The cane sticks can be spliced with varying fineness into slips of varying width & thickness. Following the splicing the cane slips are processed in different ways to bring different colours and enhance the quality. The quality of the Pati depends on the different layers of the cane, fineness of the cane slips and the process of making.



4. The core of the cane stick is used only as firewood and the ashes used as a detergent.

5. The *Sital* slips are kept in rice water for 24 hours and then boiled in the same water for making *Sada*(white) *Sital*. After boiling the cane slips are washed in water and kept in sun light for drying. The dried slips are left on the ground for the night dew to accumulate on it to increase on the finesse of the fibre.

6. Slips are also tinted with various dyes, which is then used to make different products.



4. the craftspersons

Sitalpati weaving is a family based business. There are about 14,000 families weaving Pati in Ghughumari and its surrounding area. Many families migrated from Tangail, Mymansingh, Pabna, Shirajgunge and Bikrampur areas of present day Bangladesh and settled in this region during and after the partition of Bengal. They brought with them their age old skill of Pati weaving and survived using this craft.

The craft persons have formed a society known as **Cooch Behar 1 No. Block Patishilpa Samabaye Samity**

Block	#Of Villages	#Of households	#Of craft persons	#Of women
Cooch Behar I	9	351	527	401

Men are engaged in growing and extracting fibre while women are mostly engaged in weaving. 90% of the crafts persons belong to OBC category and call themselves as *Patiwala*.

The weavers are organized under the Coochbehar 1 no block Patishilpa Samabaye Samity. Leading Sitalpati crafts persons are Tagar Rani Dey who has won national award, Gouranga Dey, Aruna Dutta, Nitya Ranjan Dey, Gitarani Pal, Jyotsna Dhar, Purna Chandra Dey and Shyamali Dutta have won state and district level awards.



5. ✓

The
weave



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8

1. Regular pati

2. Kamalkosh

3. Coloured Pati

4. Pati with woven letters.

5. Cutting of inserted slips for finishing the weave.

6. Muri bandha being done to finish the edges.

7. Introducing new structured weaves for variation in pattern.

8. Finishing process of a Pati.

Common weaves are mostly diagonal. Two or three slips overlapping two or three slips respectively (called two or three *Gachha*). The open ended slips are closed on themselves. Straight woven patterns are locally called *Chiknai*. The open ends of the slips are closed on a separate slip running parallel to that side. The loose ends are closed on an extra strand called *Muri Bandha*. Simple geometric patterns are developed using white (*Sada Sital*) and red (*Laal Sital*) slips of *pati* in both straight and diagonal weaves. Complex imagery is also developed using the diagonal weaves. This is called *Kamal Kosh*. Extremely fine slips are used to develop delicate designs and intricate patterns called *Bhushnai*.

6. the motifs



The comfort and the aesthetic appeal are obtained by the weaver's skills, weaving action and innovative use of colour, design and weave. There are few set rules about designs and patterns. The skilled weaver combines the colored weft with cream warp to create a design band at the edge. The strips may not be long enough to last through the weave, so new strips are overlapped and woven in a way that does not require joinery. Complex patterns of temple spires, animal ,birds ,human figure are some of the motif created by placing one set of strips diagonally and another set in opposite.

The natural colour variation within the sitalpati- a medley of cream and brown tones is adequate for creating patterns; additional colours need not to be introduced in coloured strips. Sitalpati are woven with flat strips in simple check, twill, zigzag, diagonal and diamond shapes with the weaver using adept manipulation of tones and designs to create mainly geometric shapes and patterns. The checkered Patis are known as 'Bhushnai'. The intricate designs take almost 35 days to be woven.



1. The butterfly motif

2. The traditional wedding motif

3. The lotus motif

4. The deer motif

5. The elephant motif

6. The peacock motif



7. ✓

The
market



Local *Pati Haat* is held twice a week on Monday and Thursday at the premises of Cooch Behar I block Patishilpa Samabaye Samity. This is the central hub for all the business transaction of Sitalpati of this area. About 70 middlemen locally called as Mahajan come to the haat to buy the Pati of different quality from the weavers. Weavers from far off villages visit the haat to sell their Patis. Most of these Patis are sold in North-East region of India where various diversified products are made from these. At present there is a business of about 1 crore rupees in this craft done predominantly in the local market. Only a few craftsmen directly supply their products to the market in the places like Bihar, Assam etc.



8. the product









A common facility centre has come up in Ghughumari with the help of West Bengal Khadi and Village Industries Board. While in Cooch Behar, visit the resource centre to know more about the craft and see award winning artefacts.





9. the folkart Centre



10. directory

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Rural Craft and Cultural Hubs

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